

II. Public Issues and Management Concerns

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CHAPTER II. PUBLIC ISSUES AND MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

The many issues and management concerns initially addressed in preparing this forest plan were consolidated for analysis and discussion. Much of the planning process focused on these five issues. Public comment upon the proposed forest plan further focused attention within these five broad issues, but did not add any major issues for consideration. The issues are described below.

Issue #1 - Water Quality - How does national forest management affect water quality in the Lake Tahoe Basin and what are our opportunities to improve water quality?

Analysis of effects of activities included the adverse impacts upon water quality. Indications of impacts were impervious surface coverage, soil and vegetation disturbance other than coverage, monitoring data on sediment deposits and algal growth, and the amount of vehicle travel that would contribute emissions toward potential atmospheric deposition of nutrients to the surface of Lake Tahoe. It was determined that activities would not exceed allowed impervious coverage or disturbance levels established for the basin. Standards and guidelines have been established in the plan to regulate the amount of impervious coverage and disturbance in any watershed, and provide soil and water protection and mitigation measures. Recreation development, including ski areas, would increase the miles of vehicle travel and resulting emissions. The plan requires that this adverse impact be mitigated. Measures for the mitigation will be coordinated with those established by the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency.

Opportunities to improve water quality were determined to exist. They consist primarily of remedial actions to restore disturbed lands and the retrofitting of facilities and developed sites with measures that would prevent erosion, infiltrate surface water runoff, and improve the capability of land to absorb nutrient laden water. A large watershed restoration program is included in the plan to accomplish the inventoried remedial actions. The goal is to complete the program in 20 years.

Issue #2 - Recreation - What kinds and amounts of outdoor recreation opportunities should be provided on national forest land, recognizing the carrying capacity limits of the Tahoe Basin?

The plan provides for increases in recreation opportunities best suited to the natural attractions of the area with restraint for the sensitivity of the environment. Dispersed, nonmotorized recreation is emphasized because of the large portion of the basin that is unroaded and because these recreation activities are least disturbing to the sensitive environment. Access to Lake Tahoe and its shoreline receives high emphasis. Skiing, scenic viewing, environmental awareness programs, camping, and hiking are also emphasized. And, since the national forest interfaces a large urban population, their needs are also considered.

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The amount of potential recreation planned is scaled to the environmental capability of the basin as determined by the thresholds. Considered as a "fair share" for the public, the amount was negotiated with the TRPA for inclusion in its regional plan. Demand projections indicate that the "fair share" would require about 50 years to fill. Without receiving a "fair share", the much more rapid development on private land would likely utilize the capacity.

Though the "fair share" is reserved and is a desired goal, it is not guaranteed. Individual recreation development actions will be analyzed to assure compatibility with the environment and with other activities in the area. Some recreation proposals may not be implemented either because they are not found compatible, or because the resource protection and mitigation measures are too expensive.

Issue #3 - Forest Management/Thresholds - What portion of the public's "fair share" of the basin carrying capacity should be allocated to forest management other than recreation use, and what is the appropriate blend of resource outputs to be contributed toward meeting national demands?

Resource attainment objectives are established and displayed in the tables in Chapter IV. Most marketable resources, other than recreation, are not cost efficient in the basin. Wood products are not a result of timber production objectives. Rather, they result from treatments to manage the health of the forest, to provide for public safety and to maintain vegetation diversity for wildlife. The overall contribution to the national demand for wood products is small. To enlarge the contribution would adversely affect the ability of the Forest Service to protect the nationally significant benefits obtained from the unique quality of Lake Tahoe. Grazing, though continued at current levels, is also not emphasized because of the potential adverse affects upon water quality and wildlife and fish habitat. Managing for larger water yield would be beneficial to user demand both within the Lake Tahoe Basin and downstream in the Truckee River. Though some increases are expected from forest treatments, inducing greater yield would be harmful to water quality. Wildlife and fish production, including habitat for threatened, endangered and sensitive species, is encouraged. Urbanization may limit the potential benefits to these resources. Mineral potential within the area is low to moderate. Development of these resources, at current value, is unlikely considering the environmental protection requirements established for the area. The TRPA plan prohibits mineral development.

Issue #4 - Further Planning Areas - How should the roadless and undeveloped areas in the "further planning" category be managed? (Congress has resolved the wilderness issue for Dardanelles, Pyramid, and the LTBMU portion of Granite Chief through passage of the California Wilderness Bill of 1984. Except for 30 acres of Granite Chief, these three areas are to be managed for nonwilderness uses.)

Both Freel and Lincoln Creek roadless areas would be used for nonwilderness purposes. These areas would remain essentially unroaded with dispersed recreation as the primary use. Summer recreation would remain substantially nonmotorized. Winter motorized access will continue as presently permitted, and helicopter accessed downhill skiing will also continue on Freel.

Roadless and undeveloped land north of Incline Village, in Mt. Rose, will be recommended to Congress for designation to the Wilderness Preservation System. Not previously inventoried, it was added to the Mt. Rose roadless area because of recent land acquisitions that have consolidated public ownership. This is a preliminary administrative recommendation that will receive further review and possible modification by the Chief of the Forest Service, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the President of the United States. Final decisions on wilderness designation **are** made by Congress.

Issue #5 - Management of Environmentally Sensitive Lots - How should environmentally sensitive lots, acquired through the Santini/Burton Act, be managed?

Acquired land outside urbanized areas would be managed by prescriptions established for those areas. (See Management Area Direction in Chapter IV.) Land acquired within urbanized areas would be included within the Urban Lots Management Area. Protection of watershed conditions is emphasized along with public safety. Transfer of some of these lands to State or local governments for use and management, as authorized by Public Law 96-586, may be desirable. Criteria has not been agreed upon between the Forest Service and State and local governments for such transfers. ~~When~~ this is accomplished, it should also serve as criteria ~~for~~ other landownership adjustments.

(End Chapter II)